

HOMILY TRANSCRIPT | Sunday, May 17, 2020

This homily was written by Fr. Paul Ballien, pastor of St. John Neumann Parish in Canton, Michigan and given during his Mass celebration on Sunday, May 17, 2020.

In today's Gospel, Jesus says that he will give us another *Advocate* to be with us always, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows him. That Spirit that Jesus is talking about of course is the Holy Spirit. Jesus also said that he is the truth. He took clear stands on many issues, and to my knowledge he never said, believe what you want to believe, it doesn't matter. Knowing the truth is critically important.

Nevertheless, this point still escapes many people because defining truth has now come to be seen as a personal liberty. As a case in point, a famous passage from a Supreme Court pro-abortion decision had this to say in regards to their decision:

“At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life.”

Now I know that sounds really profound, but it's wrong. We don't define these things, God our creator has already defined them. Human beings, Thomas Jefferson once wrote, are “inherently

independent of all but moral law.” If men defy that law, they are not free. They are slaves, at first to their own desires, and then eventually they will become slaves to political tyranny, because men who cannot govern their own desires, who lack self-control, cannot sustain a democratic government.

Over the last several decades, more and more people have thrown off the Christian faith, some are hostile to it, and they have ignored the moral law in favor of their pleasures and desires. As a result we have made ourselves unbeknownst to us, more ripe for political tyranny. In this time of day, this is a bigger danger to us than ever. I mean in the last couple of months, who would ever have thought how quickly and easily our freedoms and constitutional rights could have been taken from us? Not to say that there wasn't good reason for the shut down, but now that our worst fears haven't materialized, how hard is it going to be to get our freedoms back? How easy has it been to use fear to control us?

I mean people say if we open up people will die, as if this virus is the only thing people die

from, when the truth is, this shut down could quite as easily claim as many lives as the virus itself. And I am not talking about just suicide and drug addiction. Cancer and Heart disease combined, kill over 1 million Americans every year, which is far more than what will die from this virus. And right now, people aren't going to the doctors to get tested to see if they are in the beginning stages of cancer, and if you don't catch it early, you have a much greater chance of dying. Many people who have cancer are missing their chemo treatments. People with heart conditions haven't been given their pacemakers or heart surgery. I know a guy who has 90% blockage in his heart, and can't get surgery, he could die of a heart attack any day. These are the unintended consequences of an extended shutdown. Not to mention all the suffering, the many people who lost their businesses, their life savings, their livelihoods, who can't pay their mortgage and can't provide for their families. There are some things that are worse than death. And for some people, to lose these all of these things and their freedom, is worse than death itself.

The point of all of this is not to be critical of people who choose to shelter in place, that is absolutely fine, and I especially encourage vulnerable populations to continue doing so, and I encourage people to take proper precautions, but at what point does the loss of freedom and constitutional rights to live life become intolerable? If we as a people lose virtue and character, we lose perspective, wisdom and courage, and we become much more susceptible to being controlled through fear. If people are empty on the inside, then there is nothing they would live for, and nothing they would die for. This is how we can lose our liberty and freedom that past generations in our country fought and sacrificed their lives for. If we lose God in our lives, then the state will happily step in and become our god instead, which is really unfortunate because the government is not the source of truth and freedom, especially a government that wants to grow and protect its power, rather than recognize where the true higher authority comes from.

We have to remember that true freedom consists in obeying the dictates of right reason

and submitting to the natural law. True liberty is not of man's own design, but a submission of self to a higher law. True freedom is the ability to do the good that we are called to do. But when all our wants and desires become the measure of truth, we end up enslaving ourselves to our own passions and desires, which ultimately makes us easy prey for tyrants. However, when we are able to choose what is truly good, despite our feelings, it is then that we experience true freedom and liberty.

Jesus tells us he will not leave us orphans, and that he will leave us the spirit of truth. This is certainly good news because its not all guess work as to what we need to do in order to have a good relationship with God. This is yet another sign that God really does love us. I mean think about it this way, if you love your children, you are going to teach them right from wrong so that they can grow up and live happy and healthy lives right? God is no different. We are his children and he wants us to know right from wrong, He is not indifferent to us, he doesn't want us to be spoiled rotten brats, he wants us to be able to imitate Him and His goodness and love, so that

we can love Him back. This is one reason why Jesus the Son of God came into the world, not only was it to save us, but he also came so as to reveal the truth about God, who He is, what He is like, and what He expects of us, so that we can have a genuine loving relationship with Him. After all, it makes it a lot easier to love somebody, if we can actually know them. But if God is a stranger to us, if we can't really know Him, or what He expects of us, then how can we really love him or feel passionate about him in any meaningful way? This is why so many people live their lives with an indifference towards God, it's because they don't know him.

Consequently, Jesus sends us this spirit of truth because God wants what is best for us. He wants us to know the truth, he wants us to live it out, since it is the truth that sets us free. If we hunger for that truth in our lives then that spirit of truth will help us to know the love of God that brings us the joy, the freedom and life that we long for. That is what recognition of objective truth will bring us. And we need not look any farther than Jesus Christ to find it.